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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 000038

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SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: INDIA TSUNAMI SITREP JANUARY 3

REF: NEW DELHI 33

1. (SBU) Summary: India-wide, consular officers have amassed a database of 500 missing persons inquiries to which they are responding, but still have no reported Amcit casualties in India. Mission engagement with the GOI on tsunami relief for India and the region continued with the Ambassador's January 3 meeting with Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and USAID's allocation of USD 3.1 million in relief. The Ambassador will meet with local media on January 4 to highlight USG disaster assistance efforts and our partnership in the Core Group. The GOI has increased its aid to neighbors with two ships scheduled to arrive in Aceh, even as its own casualty figures climb. End Summary.

Consular Outreach

2. (U) There are still no reported Amcit casualties in India, but consular officers are processing about 500 inquiries on people who are possibly missing. Consular New Delhi has been coordinating the response India-wide, referring calls to ConGen Chennai or ConGen Calcutta as necessary. The Mission has created a database of Task Force calls as well as emails to ensure that each inquiry receives a response daily. Consular New Delhi has an officer each in Thailand and Colombo supporting those missions' operations.

US Assistance for India

3. (U) Through January 3, USAID India has provided more than USD 1.5 million in assistance to India. This includes:

- USD 50,000 for the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to be spent at the GOI's discretion;
- USD 50,000 to the Indian Red Cross for non-food and non-medical emergency relief;
- USD 650,000 to CARE India for clean water and sanitation services; and
- USD 750,000 to Catholic Relief Services for clean water and sanitation services.

An additional USD 1.6 million will soon be programmed following the approval of proposals. As of January 2, 3 DART members have been dispatched to India.

Ambassador Meets Foreign Secretary Saran

4. (SBU) In a January 3 meeting with the Ambassador, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran indicated that the PM had directed all

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VIPs to avoid the tsunami-affected regions, and suggested that visiting US Codels receive an Indian military/interagency briefing on Indian relief activities in New Delhi, rather than travel into Southern India. Saran noted that to support a VIP visit, the local bureaucracy has to shift its focus from relief activities, and that even VIP overflights would be disruptive to the Indian military's intense operational activities. While local media reported alleged Indian "anger" over Colombo's decision to accept US troops without consulting New Delhi, Saran expressed appreciation for the January 3 briefing on relief in the region that DAO provided to Indian defense staff. (Reftel provides fuller details.)

Indian Casualties

5. (SBU) The Ministry of Home Affairs reported that through January 2, 9,451 Indians had died while 5,511 were missing, compared to 8,955 and 3,754, respectively, 24 hours earlier. USAID India believes these figures are low, for example, ConGen Calcutta's economics specialist has estimated six to seven thousand are missing in the hard hit Andaman and Nicobar Islands alone.

Relief for the Neighbors

6. (U) On January 3, Ministry of Defense officials briefed

DAO on India's relief operations for Sri Lanka, Maldives and Indonesia. The GOI expects the survey ship Nirupak, which has been outfitted as a 46 bed hospital, and the stealth frigate Khukri to arrive in Aceh early on January 4. The Indian Navy now has three ships in the Maldives with the addition of the INS Sagar, and four ships and some 1,200 men in Sri Lanka.

Upcoming: Ambassador's Press Conference

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17. (U) On the afternoon of January 4, the Ambassador will meet with Indian foreign affairs correspondents to discuss the tsunami, its aftermath, and what the USG is doing to assist the affected nations.

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